

Spiritual Healing and Sufi Practices

Farhat Naz Rahman

Associate Professor, Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology, Email: rahmanfarhat@hotmail.com

Abstract

Healing is a natural gift inherent in every human being which can be used to heal oneself as well as others. Spiritual healing opens one's heart to divine love and leads to inner awakening. From the Sufi point of view, "spiritual healing" is an endeavor to "clear the cloak" or "images" that captured on the hearts of people, causing to encounter detachment from The Divine, themselves, and each other. Profound Healing, for a Sufi, is a methodology of "refining the nafs," or the conscience. This paper focuses on the basics of Spiritual healing and its roots in Sufi practices as well as the role and need of the spiritual healing in the contemporary world. Also in the context of Islam the teachings of the revealed Book "Quran" and Sunnah (sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad in this regard would be discussed in brief.

Key words: Spiritual healing, Sufism, Islam, meditation, practices, society.

Introduction

From time immemorial there is a curiosity in human being to search for the selfhood. Selfhood is a place of order and enlightenment and at the same time it is also inclined towards the Evil commanding self. If it is tempted it loses its purity. Self-purification and self-realization are the main teachings of the Sufi order in Islam.

Sufi thoughts and practices are based on the Quran, *hadith and Sunnah* (the recorded acts and the sacred saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)) and also the examples from the life of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions.

In the hadith of the Jibrā'īl, narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb, a companion of the Prophet (SAW) and the second Caliph in Islam, the basic aspects of the way of Muhammad (SAW) are laid out.

Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated: "One day while we were sitting with Allah's Messenger (SAW) a man suddenly appeared before us, wearing a very white dress and having very black hair, without any signs of journey upon him, and none of us knew him. He approached until he sat before the Prophet (SAW) with his knees touching the Prophet's knees and he placed his hands on his thighs and said: "O Muhammad inform me about Islam." Allah's Messenger (SAW) said:

"**Islam:** is to bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to offer the Salāt, Pay Zakat, fast during the month of Ramazān and to make Hajj (the pilgrimage to Makkah) if you are able and have the means to make the journey." The man said, "You spoke the truth." We were surprised at his asking and confirming at the same time. He said, "inform me about Imān." The Prophet (SAW) said:

"**Imān:** is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books and Messengers, the Last Day and to believe in the Divine Preordainment of all that is good and evil." He again said, "You spoke the truth." He said, "Inform me about Ihsān." He (SAW) said:

"**Ihsān** (perfection) is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can not see Him, surely He sees you." He said "Inform me about the Hour (Doomsday). Then the stranger left. The Prophet (SAW) remained seated for quite a while, then he asked me, "O 'Umar, do you

know who the questioner was?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "That was Jibrā'īl, he came to teach you your religion." [1]

The first two components i.e. Iman and Islam are the basic dimensions which focuses on activity (Islam) and accepting (Iman) as defined in the Hadith while the third aspect, *ihṣān* (doing what is beautiful) focus on human intentionality.

The *Ihsan* (perfection) is meant to grow the soul by indoctrinating God-consciousness in every aspect of life.

Definition

Spiritual healing is awakening the self, awakening those qualities of the human soul which have positive impact in their lives such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of peace and harmony that brings happiness to both self and others around him.

Sufi Spiritual Healing is neither a magic nor a mysterious process but is in fact very natural instinct with which every human being is born but fail to actualize this potential power. It is an instinctive ability within all human being as it is a Divine quality which human being posses. However this skill just like any other talent among humans varies in degrees. Some are gifted with healing ability that people recognize them as natural healer while others are given the ability of healing in transmission (as disciples in sufi order) and others through their inner calling take upon this or perform healing out of compassion. Some healers are unaware of their healing ability yet they help others to heal, thus they are saved from their ego-based claim since behind all healing is as-Shafi (the One Healer).

The role of Sufi Spiritual Healing is not only to cure the suffering humanity but to teach them the ways to awaken the God gifted hidden treasure. The goal of the Sufi is awakening and realization.

Each and every one of us possesses the energy field or an aura that surrounds and penetrates the physical body and hence associated with the health of the human being. The more we are optimist the more we generate positive energy while more we a pessimist the more we generate negative energy which ultimately affect not only our social circle but also the health.

In different cultures and different languages the energy is called upon by different names. The word "energy" is referred to as:

Chi in Chinese, *Ki* in Japanese, *Prana* in Hindi, *Qudra* in Arabic

Many approaches may involve energy work. Examples include:

- Reiki
- Acupuncture
- Acupressure
- Shiatsu
- Hypnosis
- Meditation
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Ayurveda
- Homeopathy

These healing methods can be categorized in four types commonly known to us:

- Modern (counseling therapy)
- Traditional (reiki, acupressure, acupuncture, Ayurveda, herb remedies, homeopathy etc.)
- Spiritual (yoga, tai chi, shiatsu, magnetism, hypnosis, breathing exercise, etc.)

- Divine Spiritual Power (meditation, zikr etc)

The Islamic Terminology for healing is Shifa'. Muslims have a staunch belief that each word of the divine book "Quran" carries Shifa', however in the holy tradition; the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) mentioned the healing properties of specific verses and section (Surah) of the Quran for different remedies. The major characteristics of Sufi practitioner is the utilization of the healing properties of blessed verses of the Quran. As a believer we believe that Holy Quran has been sent down on earth as a guide and cure to all human beings. The term Ruqya applied for the healing through recitation of the specific verses of the Quran or to make supplication by reciting specific words that are mentioned in the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Ruqya can be defined as a spiritual healing prayer in which verses from the Quran or the supplication taught by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are practiced; hence Ruqya is a Sunnah of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

There is sufficient proof from the hadith that prove the importance of ruqya in Islam.

Narrated 'Aisha (RA): During the Prophet's (PBUH) serious illness, he used to recite the Mu'awwazatayn (Surat Al-Nās and Surat Al-Falaq) and then blow his breath over his body. When his pain became severe, I used to recite those two Suras and blow my breath over him and make him rub his body with his own hand for its blessings." (Ma'mar asked Al-Zuhri: How did the Prophet (PBUH) (prayers and peace be upon him) use to blow? Al-Zuhri said: He used to blow on his hands and then passed them over his face.) Hazrat Ayesha (RA) also said that, 'Prophet Muhammad(SAW) instructed me and everybody else to do Ruqya in case of danger from evil eye'[2: 7,634]

Based on the Prophetic tradition the following are called "Ayat Al-Shifa'" or Six verses of healing, used in Sufi Spiritual Healing:

1.

وَيَتَصَرَّكُمُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِي صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

[3, 14]

"And God shall heal the inner heart of the believers."

2.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ۚ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

[4, 57]

"Mankind! there has come to you a guidance from your Lord and a healing for your hearts, and for those who believe a guidance and a mercy."

3.

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ

[5, 69]

"There issues from within the bodies of the bee a drink of varying colors wherein is healing for mankind."

4.

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

[6, 82]

"And We sent down in the Quran such things that have healing and mercy for the believers."

5.

وَ إِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

[7,80]

"And when I am ill, it is God who cures me."

(A supplication of Prophet Abraham)

6.

قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَ شِفَاءً

[8, 44]

"And declare that the Quran is a guidance and healing for the believers."

Energy and Sufi Spiritual Healing practices

"I am known only by you, just as you exist only by me.

Who knows you knows me, although no one knows me,

so that you too are known by no one."

Ibn al-`Arabi [9, 344]

Sufism has been called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions." In broader context it may be applied as the consciousness of the one reality – be it called wisdom, light love or nothing. [10,5]

As mentioned earlier every living being possess the energy field which surrounds them. The aura is basically the energy emitted by human body, while the cosmos or divine energy is the universal life force energy or in other words "Noor"[11, 35] of Allah as mentioned in Quran which used to point towards the indescribable Divine Light. When this energy disbalance the health gets affected. The significant aspect of Sufi healing is the transmission of energy from a qualified guide in the path himself is connected through chain of transmission through his earlier masters, all the way to the Prophet (PBUH) and eventually to Allah. The Sufi healer never claim self-seeking of himself or herself being the healer, but always stress upon being a medium / instrument of Allah Who is the Sole Healer. Sufi healers act as a mediator or harbinger who draw the energy from divine power One Invisible, Unseen All Intelligent Source and transmit to the sufferer. The most popular method to draw the divine energy is through meditation. Meditation is being practiced by all religions saint according to their belief system.

Islamic Sufi tradition is rich in the practice of Spiritual Healing, it is a belief of the Muslim that illness comes from Allah and Allah alone is the one who can heal it.

The ultimate goal or objective of the Sufi and all spiritual healers is to seek the blessings of Allah. In Sufism this is achieved by following the Sufi path and practices i.e. jihad (struggling) against the lower self or nafs. It is the lower self or nafs which is the main cause that lead the human being distant from Allah. Sufism in Islam means to surrender and submission to the will of Allah keeping detached from every worldly desire.

There is numerous methodology or modalities adopted by the Sufi orders to heal the wounds or the sufferings of the human being be it physical or psychological involves with purification, i.e. by reciting specific Quranic verses, Zikr, supplication, meditation, using hand or through numbers, breath work, rhythm, deep intuition, deep listening, chanting beautiful names and attributes of Allah and ruqya (reciting specific verses from The Quran and blowing it upon and individual) specifically to cure black magic..

Sufi Spiritual healing usually integrates energy work, as well as herbal and natural remedies belonging to ancient knowledge and other healing techniques principally used by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself.

The Sufi healers in Islam are considered the spiritual teachers and their utmost responsibility is to maintain and transmit the concealed and in depth knowledge contained in the Holy Qur'an. According to the Sufis, the absolute aim of life is to serve and obey Allah, to follow His divine attributes, and thus to earn His pleasure. Sufi orders consider service to humanity the utmost duty and among this service they give the most importance to healing of the sick. Their method is called the Sufi Healing.

There are various practices of most profound sense of being and enchantment that can be imparted and acquired crosswise over diverse beliefs.

Case in point, a few otherworldly conventions watch some type of reflection. Sufi reflection or Zikr Allah, takes the seeker to go from this universe of hallucination to the Divine Presence. It can include a few segments including always striving to be aware of Allah, a reiteration or summon of a supernatural equation or celestial name, or a makeshift state (hāl) in which consciousness of Allah overpowers us, and we are separated of all common concerns. Breathing activities which structure the center of most otherworldly activities can be imparted crosswise over confidence conventions.

Also Traditional medicine or therapy (water therapy, aromatherapy, etc.) occasionally used by the Sufis depending on the condition of the patient. Fasting is an alternate practice in practically all religions and otherworldly customs. Fasting is planned to control one's physical goals, lessen the personality and get to be more God-cognizant. Fasting in Islam is done in the month of Ramadan amid which Muslims refuse nourishment, drink and sexual relations from day break to nightfall every day for one lunar month. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used to quit for quite a long time or weeks on end as the year progressed. This practice is still done by numerous austere Sufis although Prophet Muhammad (SAW) strictly forbidden to follow act.

Spiritual departure or disconnection is an alternate basic practice in supernatural conventions. Isolation is a period to practice the recognition of the celestial. A few beliefs model disconnection rehearses after Prophet Moses' retreat on Mount Sinai. Also, numerous Sufis hone a forty-day thoughtful confinement, after the illustration of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his segregation in the cave of Mount Hira'.

Spiritual recovery is an alternate profound practice that is imparted crosswise over religions. The latā'if or the Nine Points of the self are identified with the chakras of Kundālīni Yoga, which is a focal piece of both Hindu and Buddhist otherworldliness, and to the hubs of the Tree of Life, a key idea in Jewish Kabbalistic most profound sense of being.

The latā'if are purposes of most extreme vitality admission and are instrumental in keeping up the body's vitality offset. Sufis accept that sicknesses can be dealt with by initiating the fitting latīfah.

Masterful statements of deep sense of being can likewise be imparted and obtained crosswise over beliefs. Islamic customs of geometric expressions and calligraphy are tremendously prevalent, alongside reverential music and move or consecrated development. Qura'nic verse can likewise unite individuals from diverse beliefs under general topics of affection and peace. Shāh Bhattai, Sachal Sarmast and La'l Shahbāz Qalandar are another example of Muslim poets who has had profound influence on Muslim, Hindu and Sikh worship in Sub Continent.

The accompanying consecrated discussion in the middle of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) depicts the significance of these practices for Sufis. It exhibits how the individual admirer can get to be progressively near Allah through preceded with commitment and adoration:

"My servant draws near to me through nothing I love more than the religious duty I require of him. And my servant continues to draw near to me by supererogatory worship until I love him When I love him, I become the ear by which he hears, the eye by which he sees, the hand by which he grasps and the foot by which he walks. If he asks me for something, I give it to him; if he seeks protection, I provide it to him." (Bukhārī)

This affection for the perfect is regularly communicated through verse, music and move (sama'). The best-known manifestation of sama' are the Whirling Dervishes of the Moulawī Sufi Order, named after the incredible example of piety and writer Moulānā Jalāl al-Din Rumī. Delighted in the recognition of God, the dervishes turn along to the ethereal music of the flute, with one hand outstretched around the paradise to get gifts and the other turned towards the earth to transmit them.

The Sufi approach of Therapy

Sufis have called the act of zikr "the recognition of flawlessness and the flawlessness of recognition." Chanted, moved, inhaled, in silence and in tone, zikr welcomes us to a complete attention to the living potentials inside our spirit. Reflection in the hush and with

different expressions of internal focuses is likewise central for Sufis and will structure a piece of the day's practices and investigating the realm of zikr, breath, heart and insightful moving.

The modification and nature of environment produced through such development and a sound practice empowers one to wind up all the more rapidly responsive to the internal planes of awareness.

Therapy and Sufism oblige one to courageously stand up to reality of oneself, and assume liability for the majority of one's encounters - considerations and feelings; decisions and circumstances. Through striving and exertion, one can recuperate from the past, and work to create a blissful present self which is liquid yet grounded, astute, and proper to every circumstance. Sufi experts encounter this procedure as a trip through perpetually developing levels of the profound heart.

Eventually, Sufism as a mystical control goes further than usual remedial objectives: the Sufi search for association with the deepest levels of truth and the most significant aspects of experience - the Sufi search to know the heavenly power. One most likely acquainted with the sonnets of the most famous mystic Moulānā Rumī, whose lyrical interpretations of affection, magnificence and transcendence are broadly utilized as touchstones by specialists, healers, craftsmen, and the profoundly slanted all through the world.

Tenderness, trustworthiness, and uniformity of people around the globe are the focal principles of Sufism. So are peace, leniency, opportunity, equity, and truth.

Healing Methods and Techniques practice by the Sufi

It is a proven fact now that energy undertakes numerous structures from the unseen to the seen, so does the act of Sufi healing. Likewise with the diagnosis of a patient, certain setting must be met possess by the healer and in the recuperating environment so mending can happen.

There are three categories for health practices

- 1) Those related to the body
- 2) For the mind or emotions
- 3) Those related to soul

The paramount and ideal amongst these are the one related to the Soul. The practices involved for the soul are highly divine in nature and have blessings above.

Medicine

There are numerous sorts of materials used to influence positive change in Sufi healing practices. Medicine contains spiritual quality, for example, words from the Holy Quran, or can be as merely physical as chicken soup. Numerous remedies are a mix of "profound" and "material" cures. Since Sufis see all power structures to be both divine and material, these types are utilized here for the advancement.

Spiritual Medicine

1) Suras and Verses from the Quran

Allah ordained in the Quran that His Book of Wisdom is healing and mercy for those who believe. The Words of Allah in the Quran show a divine energy having spiritual powers that affects and heal the minds, heart and bodies as well as the some specific Surahs and Verses are prescribed for different ailments.

2) Allah's Most Beautiful Names/Attributes

Allah portrays Himself regarding qualities, called Allah's Most Beautiful Names. There are ninety-nine Names of Allah specified in the Holy Quran. It is mentioned in Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)) that each name/attribute has a significant quality as well as a particular energy connected with it and can be utilized to influence a longing result.

Material Medicine

1) Diet and Physical Exercise

The purpose of the Sufi healing is to seek the simplest and most persistent form of therapy. The key factors to maintain the health are nourishing food and healthy drinks as well as the appropriate amount of physical exercises. For this purpose the medicinal herbs are often prescribed.

2) Environment

The need of clean and pleasant environment is the requirement of the human being in which they flourishes. Adding to that purity and calmness provide an atmosphere negative energy and negative forces cannot hit upon a comfortable corner to rest or settle.

Sufi Healing Techniques Applications

Quoting Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu:

“The healing powers of the saint are grounded in a belief in his ability to see below the surface, to the occult and social causes of illness, the thoughts, feelings and accidental transgressions which have brought about pain, chronic illness, infertility, depression, business failures and so forth.”[12]

1) Reciting Suras and Verses

In this practice the healer recites a specific Sura or Verse from the Holy Quran over the afflicted body part, the entire body or the patient's room/house. The patient may also be directed to read the passage at later intervals or the blowing on water after recitation and prescribed the patient to drink or put on the affected part of the body.

2) Zikr

In this type of healing the healer repeats a name/attribute or names/attributes of Allah over the affected part of the body of the patient's room or house for a particular number of times. Same procedure of blowing on the drink or water is also applied in some cases. Also the patient sometime directed to repeat the Zikr at later intervals.

3) Suggestion or command to Patient's Body or Afflicted Part

In this type of practice the healer makes a spiritual/telepathic connection with the affected body, mind or entire body of the patient. Generally the healer then instructed the body or mind to act in a precise way to remove the ailment. Take for example the case of diabetes, in which the healer may command the patient's pancreas to create more insulin.

4) Ingesting Spiritual Energy

In this kind of healing a Surah, Verse or combination of Names of Allah is written with some edible material (e.g., honey, turmeric), which the patient then drinks dissolving into water or eats added into food.

5) Blowing on Hands and Laying of Hands

The most common practice and frequently use by the Sufi while performing healing is *Dam* (literally, “breath or blowing”). In this technique the healer simply utters a Surah, Verse of Names/Attributes of Allah into one's hands, blows into the hands and then passes them over the patient's affected part of the body. If the particular part of the body is the source of affliction, he will focus his breath on that area or else he will blow on patient's head. In this process the blessings of the divine, channelized through the Sufi, then transferred to the patient in the breath. The power of the specific Qura'nic verse also transferred in this act.

This is also done in the other way around by laying hands upon the patient's afflicted part of the body or on patient's head. [13]

The role and need of spiritual healing in contemporary society

The world at present is in a stage of turmoil. In the current world of high technology, it is not generally trendy to depend on a Deity which you experimentally can't evaluate or analyze, however in times of urgency, when all present day pharmaceutical has fizzled out

with a medicinal cure, it is always reliably the Spiritual mending course that individuals turn to - either through their faith and belief or by utilizing a Spiritual healer. The past 30 years have witnessed a florescence in studies of spiritual and ritual healing. Healing with complementary and alternative therapies has become a need of time in today's society. The marvel of modern and conventional medicines failed to some extent to give the remedy of all the illness. Hence the seekers of healers turned towards the spiritual healers for remedy.

Quoting John Naisbitt:

"In turbulent times, in times of great change, people head for the two extremes: fundamentalism and personal, spiritual experience...With no membership lists or even a coherent philosophy or dogma, it is difficult to define or measure the unorganized New Age movement. But in every major U.S. and European city, thousands who seek insight and personal growth cluster around a metaphysical bookstore, a spiritual teacher, or an education center." [13]

Conclusion

Alternative therapy is a growing field that supports the life process. Comparatively it is nontoxic and biocompatible treatment modality. Spiritual serenity is a proposal to life. As opposed to focusing on disease or specific parts of the body, previously stated old system for health recognizes the entire individual and how he corresponds with his or her surroundings. It keeps up the association of psyche, body, and soul.

The objective is to get best prosperity, where everything is performing in the absolute way that is achievable. With all encompassing wellbeing individuals gain obligation regarding their individual level of wellbeing and regular inclination are utilized to hold charge of one's personal wellbeing. Contingent upon the care an individual can pick healing strategies; there may be hazard in utilizing specific correlative on the other hand elective medicines. The information and understanding of spiritual methodology of medicines are still a continuous process and further examinations ought to be done in this respect.

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